

DOWNTOWN BUSINESS TIPS

MARCH/APRIL 2012

The Business Tips Newsletter is brought to you in partnership by the Dahlonega Downtown Development Authority & the Dahlonega-Lumpkin County Chamber of Commerce & Visitors Center.

Google + It's Time for Small Local and Rural Tourism Businesses to Take a Look

By Joanne Steele, March 21, 2012

ruraltourismmarketing.com

I've had a number of emails over the past six months asking why I haven't written a post about using Google+. I mentioned Google+ in this post: [Battle of the Titans: Google+ One Button vs. Facebook's New Subscribe Button](#) (sorry about more titans battling – I just love sumo wrestler images!) but have been waiting and observing...

You know that I watch Google carefully since they rule the search world... which for business marketing IS the world. But they have a pretty significant history of rolling things out and dropping them. Remember Buzz? Still using Orkut (especially if you're in India)?

Knowing how busy small local business and rural tourism business owners are, I have been reluctant to add one more thing to your long internet marketing to do list. So I've waited until I was pretty certain that there was a good reason for you to jump on the Google+ bandwagon.

Lately, that reason has become evident... search engine results. Your Perfect Customer may be slow to move their social sharing to Google+, unless they're geeks or teenagers getting away from their parents on Facebook. But lately, Google has been making it more and more "rewarding" to have a Google+ profile and friends in your Circles. Their activity and yours is now a part of Google search results.

Watch this little [video](#) from Google to see what I mean.

Notice that little stamp that is added to each of the kicky search results – it's the personal results icon. Do a Google search and look for it on the top right side. Right now, people will see the suggestions and interests of their Google+ circles and information from Twitter. Remember, Google doesn't index info on Facebook for a number of confusing reasons that might change over time, particularly if the government feels that Google is giving its own service undue advantage.

Here's the deal. Google searches are becoming more and more personalized based on a searcher's past search history and now,

input from friends on social media (Google+). My husband and I can search for the same thing and get slightly different results! Your customer friends will get personalized results based on their search history and friends' preferences (on Google+ primarily).

This personalized search will become more and more a factor as Google continues to perfect its algorithm.

WHAT'S A BUSINESS OWNER TO DO TO IMPROVE HIS OR HER SEO???

1. Be aware of what Google does, and do what's necessary to keep Google happy. In this case, set up a Google+ account and start looking for your customer friends there. Here is a [Mashable Google+ guide](#) to give you all the help you'll need to get this done. If you're wondering if this will become a lesson series over at [Take Control of Your Internet Marketing](#) the answer is yes, in Module Four. It is definitely more important to build a vibrant Facebook personal profile presence since most of you have a significant number of Perfect Customers on Facebook, and [Google+ is still appealing to mostly early adopters and young people](#) – 100,000,000 of them.

2. Continue to do what you do best – provide wonderful informative content...on your website and social media outposts that serve your customer's needs and help them solve their problems. That's called content marketing, and Google will always give you high marks for doing that. You serve your customers' needs well and thus, help Google give those people relevant search results.

3. BE VERY AWARE of where your customer is hanging out BE VERY CERTAIN that you are also hanging out there (right now, on Facebook). That means, for most of you, begin to show up on Google + for reasons stated in #1. AND work extremely hard to build relationships with your customer friends who are hanging out on Facebook, and aren't likely to move until they're forced to because all their friends have. Carve out a little time to watch the videos about Google+ at Mashable. When the *Big Move* from Facebook happens, if it does, you want to be sitting at Google+ waiting to greet all those customer friends.

Share this newsletter with your staff!

Marketing Plans

Why you need them & What should be in them!

By Rick Segel
ricksegel.com

I am constantly asked what separates successful retailers from some retailers who might be considered less than successful. That's just a nice way of saying, "What do the winners do?" and "What don't the also runs do?" Is it a store's location? It is sometimes. Is it the store's advertising? It can be. Is it management? Management usually affects every aspect of a business, so we have to say, "Yes." One consistent tool that all successful businesses have is the businesses' ability to sell what they're selling. That covers a lot of territory. It's not just selling skills that are important, which they are; but it's also advertising, promotion, interior advertising (aka signage), and a web and social media presence. When we say a marketing plan covers a lot of territory, it's more so now than ever before because of the amount of tools that are available today. Many of them didn't even exist three years ago.

If we don't have a plan and address the tools that we are planning or not planning to use, we can have a tendency of being tempted by the first bright and shiny new application that comes down the pike. There is no longer a standard list of tools that every marketer needs to use plus what works in some markets doesn't work in others. That's not necessarily news – denture cream wouldn't sell well if it was advertised on MTV.

Many people confuse a business plan with a marketing plan. They are not the same thing. A marketing plan consists of the ways you are going to capture feet and eyeballs into your marketing net. The web has been described as the battle for eyeballs. A good marketing plan describes the tools, techniques, and timing used to attract people to come to your website and walk through your front doors. The mistake that many marketers make is that they think their job is done when the customer arrives at the store or website. It used to be that way and marketing agencies were very quick to say "we can bring you traffic --- it's up to you to sell them." They are not wrong, but a marketing plan today must include the final element, which is making the sale. That does not include a hard-sell approach. Remember, customers love to buy but hate to be sold.

There is one consistent marketing attribute that the successful modern retailers employ and one attribute that many stores tend to ignore: that is the use of an institutional/ image type of marketing approach. Another way of putting that is sell the business and establish a clear brand identity in the mind of the consumer. I mention this because it must be included in your marketing plan.

The following elements are part of a good marketing plan:

1. Executive Summary: a brief description of who you are and what you do
2. The challenge: your company analysis
3. Defining your customer: who your customer is and who your customer is not
4. Competitor analysis: who is the competitor and why, and what you need to do in order to become a leader in your market base
 - a. Understanding your strengths
 - b. Weaknesses
 - c. Opportunities
 - d. Threats – this is the time to be brutally honest and list your shortcomings; it's the first step in overcoming them
5. Address specific marketing tools such as blogs, websites, and social media
6. Collaborators/ partners: Positioning
7. Product
8. Price
9. Promotions
10. Short and long-term projections
11. Conclusion
12. Plan B: if one plan doesn't work, then what will work?

In short, a good marketing plan should say who you are, who your customer is, who your competition is, what the market conditions are, how you are going to approach the market situation, what alternate plans you might have, and how you're going to measure success. Just going through the steps and creating this process will give you, and your business, a new way of thinking.

Google AdWord Express can help to promote your business on Google and partner websites in minutes. When people search the area for the products or services you provide an ad for your business will appear above or beside their search results. Your business will also be marked with a blue pin on Google Maps, helping it stand out to potential customers.

Click [HERE](#) for more information & [HERE](#) to watch the overview video.

Mark Your Calendars!

Downtown Dahlonega Merchant Coalition (DDMC) News

If you are not yet included in the Downtown Dahlonega Merchant Coalition Facebook group, please email or call Rebecca Shirley & she will get you invited.

Rebeccashirley@dahlongadda.org
706-482-2707

This private group allows merchants to share information about upcoming events, visiting groups, festivals, and anything else you have on your mind!!

Join us for the April DDMC meeting on Wednesday, April 25, 8:30 AM, in the Chamber of Commerce boardroom.

RSVP at this [LINK](#).

<p>Farm Fresh, Locally Grown</p>  <p>Every Saturday</p> <p>May 5 through October 27 8 AM until 1 PM</p> <p>Waters Street (Adjacent to the downtown BB&T building off West Main Street)</p> <p><i>Available In Season:</i> Local Fresh Produce Plants & Flowers Locally made Honey Culinary Herbs Jams & Jellies And MUCH MORE!</p>	<p>First Friday Night Concert Series</p>  <p>Shows begin at 6:30 PM</p> <table><tr><td>June 1</td><td>Kurt Thomas</td></tr><tr><td>July 6</td><td>Tom & Juli Remember When Band</td></tr><tr><td>August 3</td><td>Fool's Gold of Dahlonega Fiddleheads</td></tr><tr><td>September 7</td><td>Ugly Cousin American Anodyne</td></tr><tr><td>October 5</td><td>David Brothers Band</td></tr></table>	June 1	Kurt Thomas	July 6	Tom & Juli Remember When Band	August 3	Fool's Gold of Dahlonega Fiddleheads	September 7	Ugly Cousin American Anodyne	October 5	David Brothers Band	<p>Appalachian Jam Acoustic Mountain Music</p>  <p>Every Saturday 2 - 5 PM</p> <p>April 28 through October 13, 2012</p> <p>At the Dahlonega Gold Museum State Historic Site, on the Public Square</p>
June 1	Kurt Thomas											
July 6	Tom & Juli Remember When Band											
August 3	Fool's Gold of Dahlonega Fiddleheads											
September 7	Ugly Cousin American Anodyne											
October 5	David Brothers Band											

The weekend of April 20, 21, 22



The "Downtown Business Tips" newsletter is intended to provide merchants with monthly information about improving their business's position in the market! Please send your comments & suggestions to Rebecca Shirley, rebeccashirley@dahlongadda.org, 706-482-2707.

Use our website www.dahlongadda.org for business resources.

Joel Cordle, Director
joelcordle@dahlongadda.org

Rebecca Shirley, Project Coordinator
rebeccashirley@dahlongadda.org
Phone: 706-482-2707

